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21 July 1950

Dear Mr. Webb:

The Staff-Study, "Production of National Intelligence", dated 1 May 1950, transmitted with your letter of 7 July for my comments, brings up for consideration the two conflicting theories which have prevailed in Washington for some time on the responsibility within our Government for the production of national intelligence (that is, a responsible central agency versus a responsible committee).

Your Staff Study favors the second approach, somewhat similar to the British system, whereby this Agency would furnish services and administrative support for the responsible Committee, but the Committee would have the collective responsibility for the production of national intelligence by a cooperative process.

You will recall that the National Security Council (in NSC 50) disavowed the principle of collective responsibility and re-affirmed the value of an advisory committee of intelligence chiefs. To change to your proposed system would entail, I think, new legislation; so the National Security Council should, if it desires such a change, take steps accordingly to advise Congress that it favors the idea of collective committee responsibility and authority rather than the present system based on a responsible coordinating central agency.

I think that, under the existing legislation, it was the intent of Congress to have a responsible central intelligence agency to coordinate intelligence matters. Certainly I, as the Director of Central Intelligence, am the individual called before Congress as being responsible in intelligence matters. In his testimony recently, the Secretary of Defense stated that he had not been advised by CIA; he did not refer to the intelligence agencies in the Pentagon. For the views of the Secretary of Defense concerning this Agency and the part it should play, I refer you to his remarks concerning the recent report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Atomic Energy Intelligence and the Intelligence Advisory Committee comments thereon. The President calls upon me for intelligence estimates; this would indicate that he, also, believes in a responsible central agency.

I am glad that this matter has now been brought up and hope that it will be clarified for the benefit of all concerned as well as in the interest of national security. With this in mind I enclose two proposed National Security Council Directives to reflect my views on a strong central agency with authority adequate to its responsibility, in lieu of the proposal incorporated in your Staff Study.

attached
I also enclose ~~in a separate paper~~ several comments concerning specific passages of the Staff Study.